## SENATE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

LANSING, MICHIGAN

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## Senate Democrats Strengthen Water-Use Legislation

LANSING—Taking the first steps toward improving protection of Michigan's water resources, the state Senate today passed legislation that creates guidelines and oversight for water use and withdrawal.

"We have fought long and hard for substantial improvement to Michigan's existing water withdrawal legislation," said Sen. Liz Brater (D-Ann Arbor). "We still have more work to do, but this package of bills improves upon the existing standards. Michigan citizens expect us to take strong measures to protect Great Lakes water, and this package is an important first step."

Twice, last year and earlier this year, Sen. Brater introduced the Water Legacy Act. When it became apparent that the Republican-controlled legislature was not going to address the issue through her proposed bills, Sen. Brater and her Senate Democratic colleagues introduced an alternative package that would further Michigan's water withdrawal protections. Under public pressure, Republicans responded with their own water withdrawal legislation, which were the bills eventually taken up in the Senate. Senate Democrats successfully presented amendments in the committee process to strengthen these bills.

The bills passed today enhance existing law in the following ways:

- Create new permit process for large quantity withdrawals;
- Create a dispute resolution process so that local communities can resolve water conflicts; and
- Create a standard to protect water resources from excessive water withdrawals.

"The bills passed today include important improvements over current law, but Michigan citizens also want a guarantee that their water will not be shipped away," said Sen. Ray Basham (D-Taylor). "We still have work to do."

Determined to give Michigan citizens the tools they need to protect their water resources in a more meaningful way, Senate Democrats presented three amendments that would have strengthened the protections outlined in the bills. These amendments were shot down by the Republican-controlled Senate. They included:

- Requiring legislative approval for diversions outside of the Great Lakes Basin;
- Expanding protection to all water habitats, whether or not these water bodies include fish; and
- Requiring the adoption of industry-specific generally accepted conservation practices.

The bills passed today also do not address the contentious issue of shipping bottled water outside of the Great Lakes Basin. Sen. Brater 's first amendment to SB 850 would have given Michigan the ability to prevent these types of withdrawals.

"Water bills that include exemptions for the bottled water industry crush the heart of our bills. It doesn't matter how our water leaves the state. Water is a public resource, and it must remain so," explained Brater.

Though many amendments were voted down, the final legislative package passed with the unanimous support of the Senate.